

Streets & Circulation 4

4.1 Design of the Streetscape

Streetscape standards for the Southwest Downtown Plan Area (Plan Area) have been developed as a component of the Southwest Downtown Plan (the Plan). Currently, many of the streets in the Plan Area do not have defined on-street parking, and there are several instances where on-site parking requirements have been met using the existing street right-of-way. In addition, a significant number of driveways and curb cuts exist on each block. In most of the Plan Area, curbs and sidewalks exist where businesses were required to install them, resulting in discontinuous sidewalks and confusion about where private yards end and where the public street begins.



Figure 4.1: The lack of defined curbs and parking areas is a source of some confusion; a few property owners have installed landscape timbers in place of a curb to delineate where street parking ends and their front yards begin.

PageSoutherlandPage, consultants for the Municipal Office Complex project, have created a plan to upgrade streets and utilities in the Plan Area. For streets, this includes defining on-street parking, constructing curbs and gutters, and providing sidewalks. PageSoutherlandPage proposes saving trees in the right-of-way and incorporating them into the streetscape design. In addition, new street trees are proposed to be planted in the Plan Area to define the streetscape.

With the exception of Brown Street, angled parking will be the standard for the Plan Area, providing the maximum number of on-street parking spaces. As the most direct route to the new City Hall, Brown Street will have parallel parking to accommodate wider sidewalks and denser tree

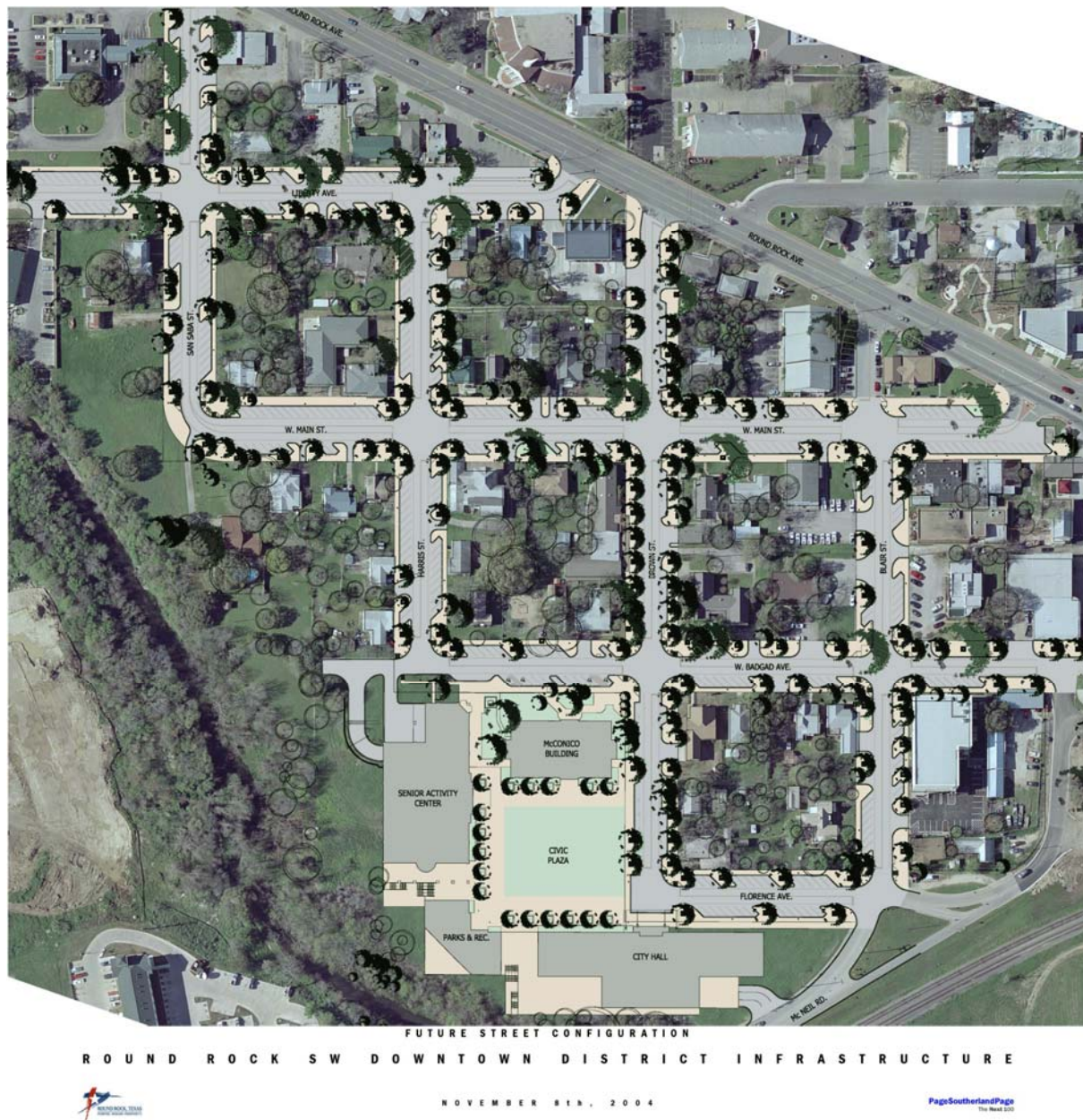


Figure 4.2: **Southwest Downtown Street Improvement Plan.** The street improvements are part of an overall infrastructure improvement plan that was approved in a City bond election. Objectives of the street improvements are to complete curbs and gutters to improve drainage, increase the number of on-street parking spaces, complete the sidewalks and improve their appearance, and to preserve the Plan Area's many large trees and incorporate them into a street tree plan along with new trees. Tree roots and utility placement may warrant minor modifications of the Street Improvement Plan. *Illustration: PageSouthernlandPage.*

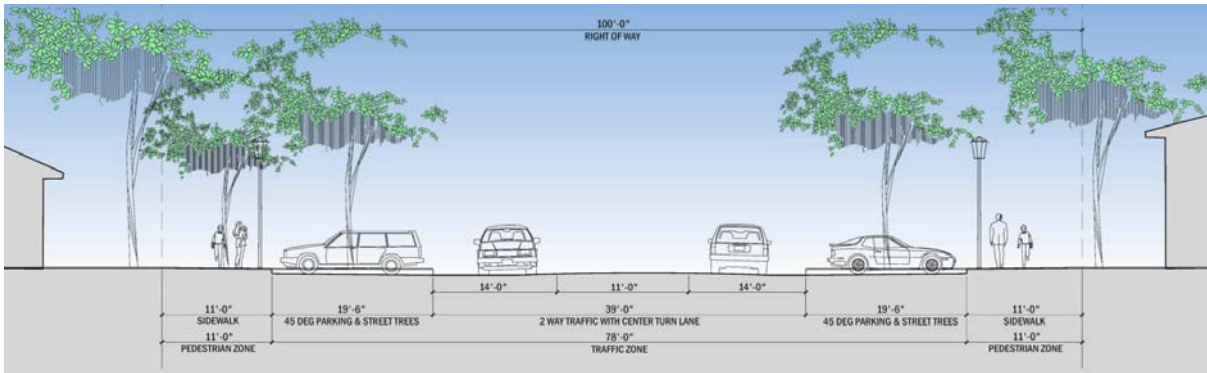


Figure 4.3: Proposed Main Street section*
Illustration: PageSouthernlandPage

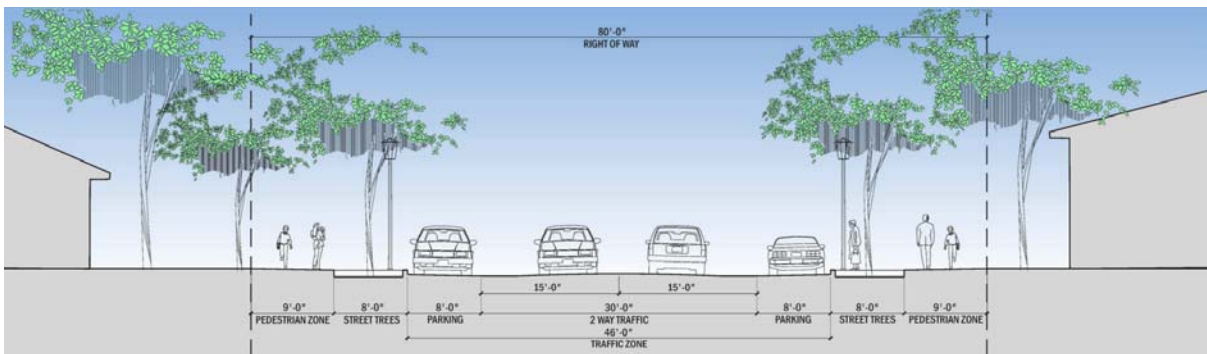


Figure 4.4: Proposed Brown Street section*
Illustration: PageSouthernlandPage

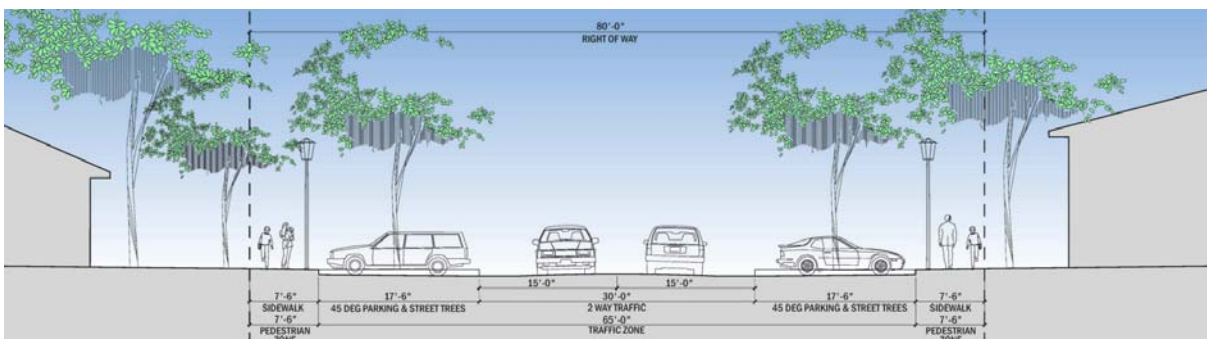


Figure 4.5: Proposed section, all other Southwest Downtown Plan Area streets*
 (Liberty, Bagdad, Florence, Blair, Harris, San Saba).
Illustration: PageSouthernlandPage

* Proposed street sections reflect design of streetscape for the Street Improvement Plan. Minor modifications may be necessary to reflect changes to engineering or to accommodate tree roots and/or utility placement.

plantings to give the street the distinctive characteristics of a boulevard.

In order to unify street design in the Plan Area, the design process must be customized because of existing driveways and parking. City Staff worked with property owners during the creation of the Street Improvement Plan in order to incorporate necessary site-specific changes. The original Street Improvement Plan has been altered many times to establish what would work best for each property. In some cases, existing on-site parking in the right-of-way will be moved, and some property owners have opted to forgo their driveway access in order to have more on-street area for parking spaces.

Originally, most blocks in the Plan Area were served by alleys, some of which are still in use. Others exist legally but have been obscured by trees and outbuildings. The potential use of alleys for service access, utility corridors, and parking should be considered. Vehicle access from the rear of a property may be possible in many instances. This is preferable so that sidewalks are not interrupted with curb cuts that reduce on-street parking and make streets less safe for pedestrians.

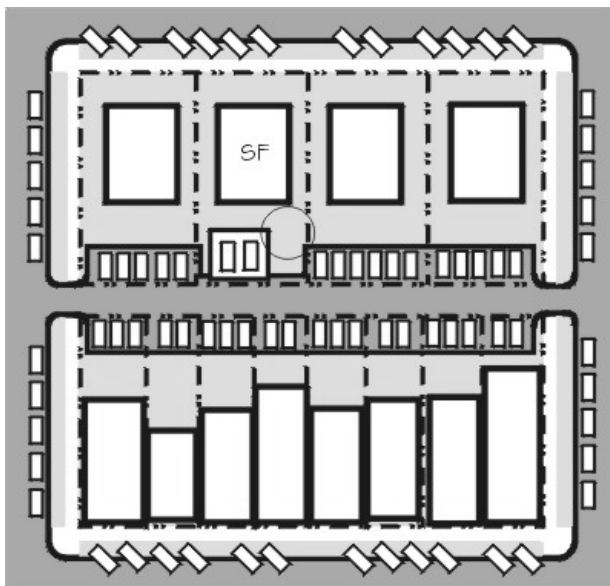


Figure 4.6: Parking capacity could be improved through better use of the remaining alleys. Employees could park in back, freeing street spaces for customers. Fewer driveway cuts would permit more street spaces. Customers are less likely to mistakenly use a resident's (for example the single-family house (SF) to the left) private parking spaces if they are located in the rear.

4.2 Traffic & Circulation

Two public workshops were held to discuss issues of traffic and circulation. At the first meeting, the neighborhood was asked to develop a list of traffic issues it felt needed to be addressed:

Figure 4.7: Traffic & circulation issues

Street Layout Issues:

1. Connect East and West Main Street for both pedestrians and cars
2. Have better access to RM 620
3. How do we minimize cut-through traffic?
4. What about one way streets in Southwest Downtown?
5. Create uniform street sections
6. Variable paving widths/lanes
7. Round Rock Avenue abandonment to re-create grid at Liberty and Main
8. Extend Main to frontage of I-35
9. Alley connections

Streetscaping Design Issues:

(trees, signs, etc.)

1. Create uniform street sections
2. Variable paving widths/lanes
3. Signage not consistent
4. Wayfinding signs needed for City buildings (Municipal Court, etc.)
5. Sidewalk continuity
6. Street continuity – stop signs, stop lines, etc.
7. Tree preservation in right-of-way

Business-Related Traffic Concerns:

1. Truck traffic through the neighborhood
2. Delivery trucks
3. On-street parking of delivery trucks
4. Reckless driving by delivery drivers

Interstate 35-Related Topics:

1. McNeil exits – what is the impact of closing on and off ramps?
2. Impacts of Hesters Crossing changes

Pedestrian & Bicycle Access & Safety:

1. Connect East and West Main Street for both pedestrians and cars
2. Alley connections
3. Connect new Municipal Office Complex to existing City Hall building on East Main Street
4. Children using Liberty - pedestrians
5. Brown/Blair need pedestrian improvements
6. Look at Berkman Elementary and C.D. Fulkes Middle School enrollments to coordinate pedestrian routes
7. Connection between Main Street and hike and bike trails of Trails Master Plan
8. Bicycle access and safety on streets as well as trails

Traffic in Specific Areas:

1. Traffic on RM 620 and Mays
2. Light at Liberty and Mays
3. Blair traffic: confusion, stop signs, access to Round Rock Avenue
4. Difficulty entering Round Rock Avenue at W. Main Street stop sign
5. Liberty and Brown intersection

Traffic Issues for Specific Segments of the Population:

1. How does transportation system serve seniors?
2. Children using Liberty - pedestrians
3. Berkman Elementary and C.D. Fulkes Middle School enrollments for pedestrian routes

The second public workshop determined that many of these issues could be addressed through the redesign of the streetscape.

Currently, many of the intersections in the Plan Area are not clearly marked. Future traffic controls used will depend on what, if any, changes are made to the street layout and traffic patterns. With upgrades to streets, there will be consistency in street paving and design. Signage and pavement markings will be applied consistently as well.

Pedestrian routes will be greatly improved with the installation of sidewalks on both sides of the street. A strong connection should be established between the Plan Area and future trails and open space, which would benefit both cyclists and pedestrians.

4.3 Recommendations for Future Changes to Street Layout

Several options for changes to the street layout were proposed by the neighborhood in public workshops at which participants brainstormed on traffic, circulation and street design issues. Potential solutions were then examined by City Staff, producing three project proposals for street layout changes. These project proposals include:



Figure 4.8: Proposed changes to the street layout can be grouped into three projects*:

- 1) Extend West Main Street across the creek to the frontage road of IH-35
- 2) Close Round Rock Avenue between Brown and Mays, routing traffic to Brown and Liberty
- 3) Extend Harris Street north to Round Rock Avenue

Illustration: Huggins/Seiler & Associates

** If these three proposals are funded, feasibility and traffic studies will be required.*



Figure 4.9: Proposal #1: extend Main Street across Lake Creek to the IH-35 frontage road.

Illustration: Huggins/Seiler & Associates



Figure 4.10: Proposal #2: redesign the Round Rock Avenue – Liberty – Main – Mays intersections.

Illustration: Huggins/Seiler & Associates



Figure 4.11: Proposal #3: extend Harris Street north to intersect with Round Rock Avenue.

Illustration: Huggins/Seiler & Associates

Proposal 1: Extend Main Street across Lake Creek to the IH-35 frontage road.

This was suggested as a means to improve access to the Plan Area and create a “gateway” into downtown. This proposal would require purchasing land and building a bridge over Lake Creek while accommodating a hike-and-bike trail along the Creek.

Proposal 2: Redesign the Round Rock Avenue-Liberty-Main-Mays intersections.

There are three parts to this proposal:

- Close Round Rock Avenue between Brown and Mays Street. This area could be used as public space in the future.
- Reconnect Main Street across Mays Street with a four-way intersection.
- Divert traffic from Round Rock Avenue to Liberty Street and install a signal at Liberty and Mays. Traffic heading eastbound on Liberty will be diverted back to Main Street at Sheppard or Burnet Street.

Proposal 3: Extend Harris Street north to intersect with Round Rock Avenue.

This proposal was originally suggested as a way to provide a direct route to and from the new Senior Activity Center at Harris and Bagdad. The City would be required to acquire the property at 400 Round Rock Avenue, and Liberty would have to be terminated in a cul-de-sac on the west side of Brown Street to provide access to businesses.

At the time of the Plan’s adoption, no funding or timeline is in place for these three proposals. It is unlikely that they would commence before the end of this decade. Additional feasibility and traffic studies will be required.

Ranking of Street Layout Changes

The neighborhood put these changes to a vote by asking workshop participants to assign a priority to the three proposals or to indicate if they thought a proposal inappropriate for the Plan Area. The results of voting were as follows:

Proposal #2 (Redesign the Round Rock Avenue-Liberty-Main-Mays intersections) received a high-medium priority, the highest of the three proposals. Three people thought the proposal was inappropriate and should not be considered.

Proposal #1 (Extend Main Street across Lake Creek to the IH-35 frontage road) received a medium priority rating. One person felt the proposal should not be considered.

Proposal #3 (Extend Harris Street north to intersect with Round Rock Avenue) received a medium-low priority rating, with four people indicating that the proposal should not be considered.

Please note that these proposals have not been subjected to a Traffic Impact Analysis as an objective measure of their effectiveness, nor has funding for such a study been sought. If the results of the Traffic Impact Analysis indicate a positive impact from any/all of the proposals and the City Council decides to pursue any of them, the next steps would be to obtain cost estimates and put forth a bond referendum in a City general election.

4.4 Streets & Circulation Recommendations

- Implement plans to improve streets by adding new curbs, gutters, sidewalks and on-street parking.
- Minimize disruption to businesses and property owners while street and sidewalk construction is in progress.
- Increase and define on-street parking.

- Fund the planting of street trees as part of the Street Improvement Plan.
- Continue to work with property owners during the implementation of the Street Improvement Plan to incorporate site-specific changes if necessary.
- Encourage vehicular access from the rear of a property in order to have continuous sidewalks and to accommodate additional on-street parking.
- Continue to address traffic and circulation issues that were presented at neighborhood public workshops.
- Improve continuity through consistent street design, pavement markings and signage.
- Establish a strong pedestrian connection between the Southwest Downtown Plan Area and future trails and open space.
- Examine the potential of the three street layout proposals brought forward by the neighborhood and outlined in Chapter 4 (Streets and Circulation). Complete necessary traffic studies and explore funding options to assess feasibility.
- Ensure coordination with the City of Round Rock Parks and Recreation Department for proposed street layout changes to ensure a hike and bike trail can be located under the proposed bridge connecting Main Street to the IH-35 frontage road, and to assist in the design of the public space that would result from the proposed redesign of the Round Rock Avenue-Liberty-Mays intersections.

